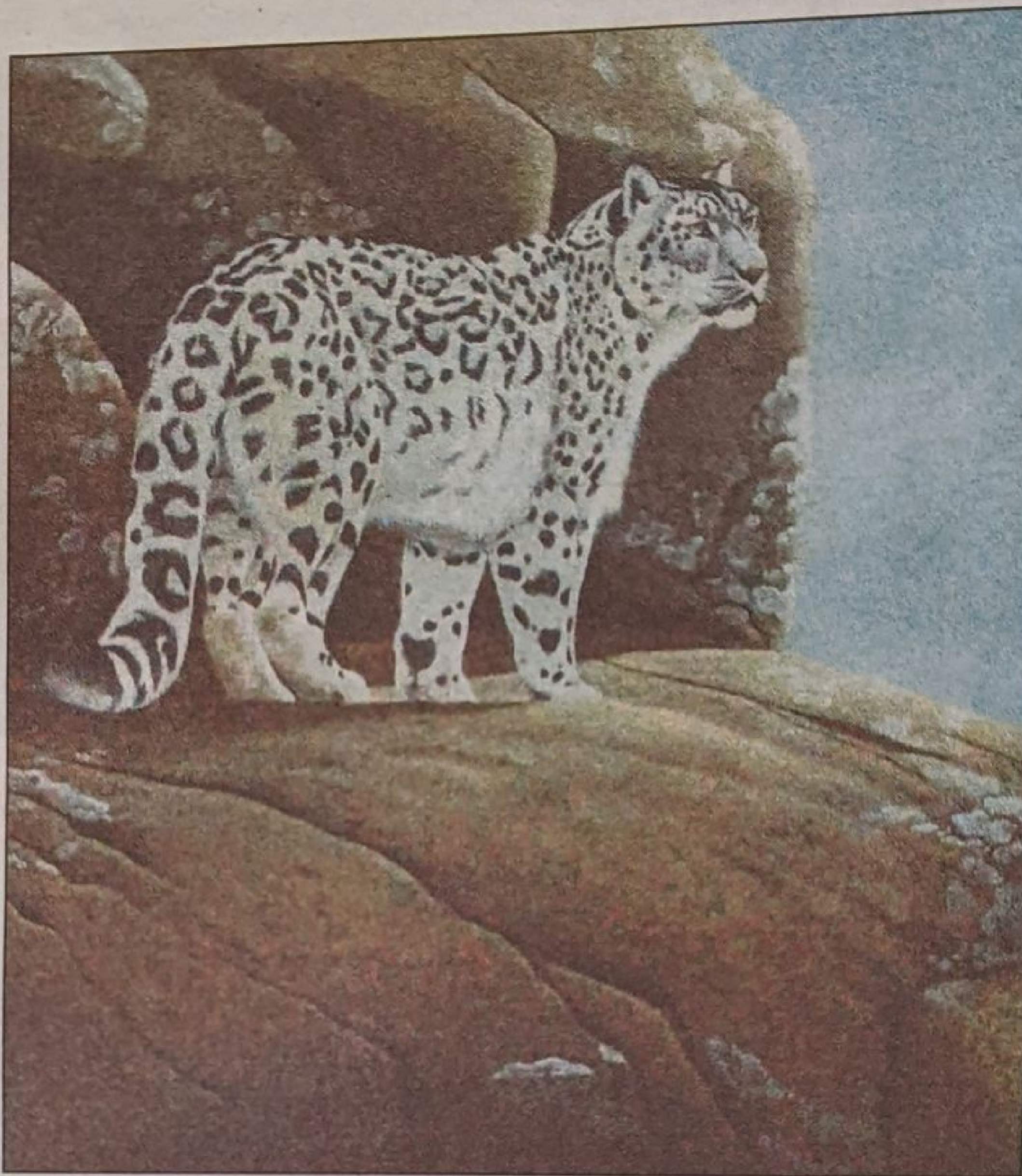


Feature

# Art on nature trail as studios



Extract from Nic Vickery's Spring Garden



Andrew Forkner's Roof World Snow Leopard

### ESTHER LAFFERTY heads west to visit studios opening up

**A**RTISTS and craftworkers and designers throw open their doors this week as the county's festival of creativity continues.

Having launched last week in the south of the county, Oxfordshire Artweeks, this week moves into the west and north.

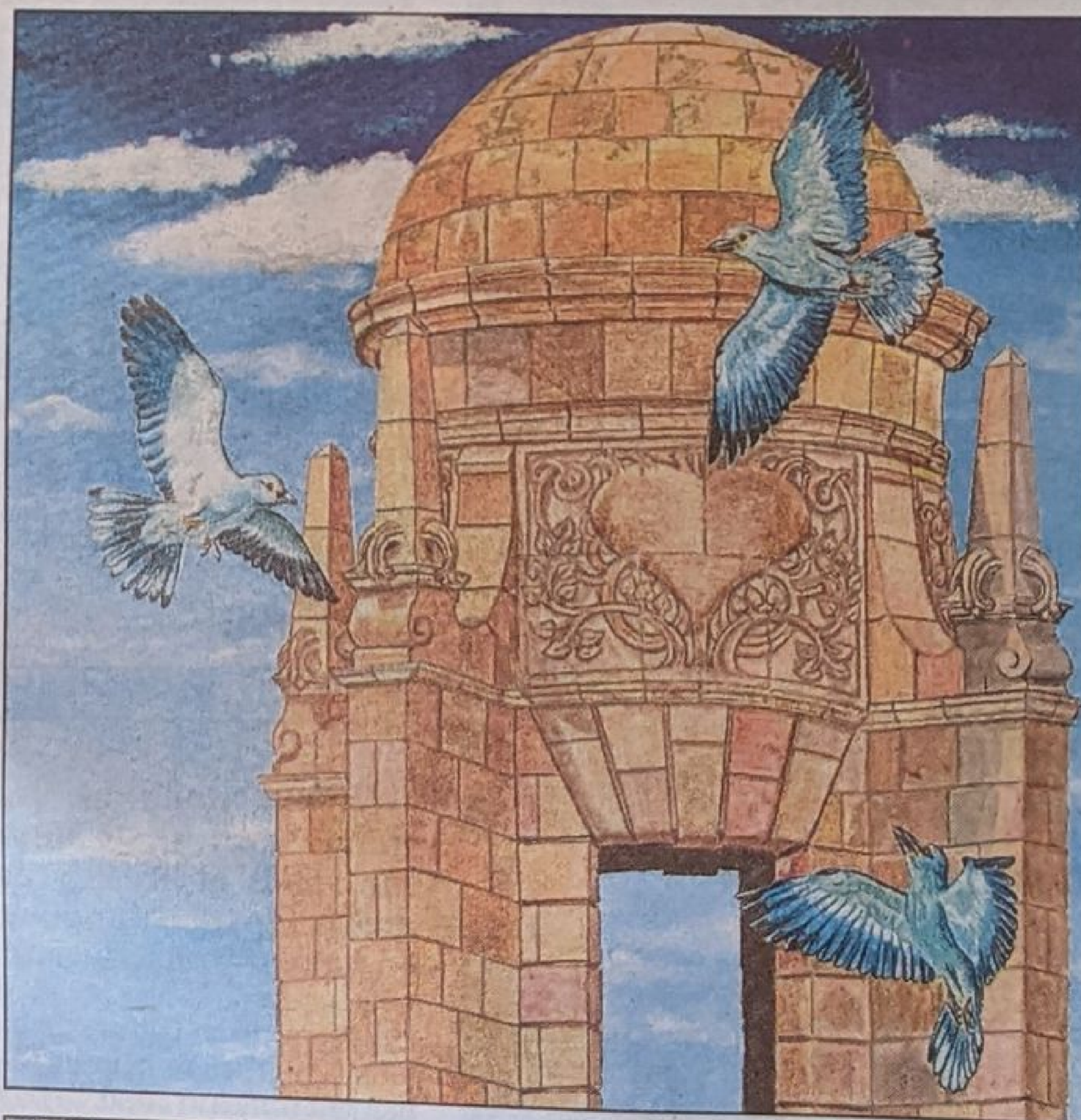
The spectacle, the county's biggest visual arts event which runs until May 20, offers everything from painting to pottery, sculpture to jewellery. And demonstrating its creative credentials is Witney, where 50 venues in the town and surrounding villages welcome visitors in, many giving them a chance to see work underway.

The exhibitions include a group show by the Witney art group Artistic Licence in the Corn Exchange, and a pottery studio on Corn Street in which Artweeks newcomer Stephen Broughton, teacher and technician in art and design at Abingdon and Witney college, is showing his wheel-thrown ceramics inspired by the simple beauty of function.

Derwent House on Bridge Street, invites the public to explore handcrafted furniture, printed and woven textiles, and unique ceramics, glass and homewares from a collective of over 25 emerging and established furniture designers, craft makers and artisans.

On Manor Road, Witney husband and wife team Andrew and Kerry Forkner are exhibiting a varied display of work inspired by the natural world in their home studio-gallery.

Andrew is an accomplished self-taught wildlife artist known for the intricate detail and lifelike qualities he captures in his art using graphite pencil, coloured pencil, acrylics and pastel. He is a keen naturalist and has



Nic Vicker's Hare Art Nouveau interiors, here, and Roll Up Roll Up, above



Asthall Old Forge. Picture: Ed Nix

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# show wildlife-inspired work

travelled in both this country and abroad in search of wildlife.

At the start of his career Andrew mostly produced illustration work, drawing birds and animals for journals, magazines and books; now his subjects range from delicate garden birds to majestic predators. Presenting the character and personality of each animal with a keen eye, Andrew portrays the essence of each species and its unique habitat with colour and texture, combining traditional artistic techniques with a modern sensibility and scientific accuracy.

Each piece draws attention to the beauty and importance of our natural world and the species that inhabit it, whether capturing the grace of a soaring bird or the powerful intensity of a hunting predator, to provide a powerful message about conservation and environmental awareness.

During the exhibition you can see a Tawny Owl sitting against the weathered wood of an old farm building – the colours and marks in the wood mirroring its plumage patterns. In Roof of the World Andrew has purposely tried to reflect the patterns of the Snow Leopard with the lichen patterns on the rocks.

visitors can also browse hand-dyed, quilted and embroidered textiles and jewellery by textile artist Kerry who uses stitch to explore and interpret different surfaces, especially those from organic, natural, and historical sources and explore and links to the history of the landscape.

You can also enjoy a variety of art on Wood Green, where artist and potter Debbie Howard is inviting visitors to explore her range of inspiring ceramic tableware, and quirky paintings and mixed media art.

For more animal art, including Pepper Cow from Jeremy Clarkson's Diddy Squat Farm overlaid on a map of the Chadlington area, head west towards Burford where, at The



Nic Vickery and Artweeks co-exhibitors at the Old Forge. Picture: Ed Nix

Old Forge at Barrow Farm, Asthall, artist Nic Vickery's exhibition is inspired by the animals that roam Oxfordshire's fields; her colourful drawings and paintings are joyful, often with a light-hearted twist.

You'll also find elegant jewellery and impressive metal sculpture inspired by trees and painterly ceramics by a newcomer to the venue, Gilly Whittington. "Inspired by abstract expressionist painters, I try to get that wonderful feeling of seemingly-disorganised dynamism into each piece," she says. "And I love the exuberance of the random brushwork, and the unexpected results when the colours melt and produce a new and unexpected shade."

● See artweeks.org



Work by Gilly Whittington



Andrew Forkner's Coastal Raider, above, and Kerry Forkner's Bryn Celli Ddu jewellery, left

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